

*Washington, D.C. (December 20, 2012) – Rep. Jan Schakowsky released the following statement today after House passage of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 conference report:*

“I voted against this bill with some reluctance, because there are several important provisions included in this National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This legislation strengthens the military’s efforts to prevent and respond to sexual assault, and it allows Pentagon funds to be used to pay for abortions for female servicemembers in cases of rape and incest. It includes critical language requiring a strategy to provide security for Afghan women and girls as the United States military withdraws.

I also support the authorization of nearly \$480 million for U.S.-Israel missile defense cooperation. This includes \$211 million for the Iron Dome weapon system that proved so effective in shooting down Hamas rockets aimed at population centers during the recent conflict in Gaza.

However, I cannot vote for this legislation because it continues to fund an out-of-control defense budget and it asks Americans taxpayers to fund outdated weapons systems that the Pentagon neither wants nor needs. At a time when Congress is considering devastating cuts that would affect the most vulnerable members of our communities, this NDAA represents an irresponsible failure to rein in defense spending. Today’s bill authorizes defense spending to the tune of over \$640 billion, which is \$1.7 billion more than the Administration requested.

This week, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta stated that, in the bill under consideration today, Congress has ‘diverted about \$74 billion of what we asked for in savings in our proposed budget...to other areas that, frankly, we don’t need.’ He went on to argue that Congress is pressuring the Pentagon to ‘retain excessive force structure and infrastructure instead of investing in the training and equipment that makes our force agile and flexible and ready.’

In short, far from improving our national security, this bill forces the military to cling to an

outdated force structure that has outlived its usefulness.

In addition, the NDAA continues to restrict the President's ability to close the Guantanamo Bay detention center by blocking authority to transfer detainees for resettlement or repatriation to foreign countries or for prosecution in federal court. These provisions eliminate the Administration's ability to determine when and where to prosecute Guantanamo detainees.

I am also concerned that this bill fails to roll back some of the most dangerous provisions of last year's bill, including language allowing for indefinite military detention of terrorism suspects captured on U.S. soil. Despite a handful of important provisions, this NDAA is not good defense policy, and it flies in the face of fiscal common sense."

###